

Assemblyman **PAUL KORETZ**

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2003

Contacts: Teresa Stark – 916-319-2042
Tom Peterson (SCHAC) – 949-809-8764

KORETZ CALLS FOR PHYSICIAN GUIDELINES FOR HIV POST-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS

(Sacramento) Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) has introduced AB 879 instructing the California Department of Health Services State Office of AIDS to convene a task force to develop physician guidelines for using post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) in cases of inadvertent sexual exposure to HIV. While state guidelines exist for using PEP to prevent HIV transmission following sexual assault and needle stick exposures, there are no state guidelines for using PEP in the general population following inadvertent sexual exposures.

“In addition to safe sex education and the consistent use of latex condoms, post-exposure prophylaxis is an important weapon in the battle to prevent HIV infections,” said Assemblyman Koretz.

Post-exposure prophylaxis usually involves a 2-4 week regimen of antiretroviral medications such as AZT and 3TC beginning within hours of a likely HIV exposure. Studies of healthcare workers exposed to HIV through accidental needle stick and splash exposures to the virus have found that PEP treatment reduces the risk of HIV infection by 81%. Several countries including France, Canada, and South Africa have developed guidelines for non-occupational exposures in the general population. Massachusetts and Rhode Island also have developed similar guidelines.

AB 879 is sponsored by the Southern California HIV/AIDS Advocacy Coalition (SCHAC), a group of AIDS service providers and HIV positive individuals who advocate for better HIV public policy.

"California physicians frequently find themselves struggling with a broad range of concerns when evaluating a patient for post-exposure prophylaxis, including making an accurate assessment of the exposure risk and determining the optimal treatment approach and duration. These guidelines would provide a standardized clinical response and would provide a course of action for all Californians - regardless of whether they receive medical care in a rural, urban or suburban setting," said Tom Peterson, Co-Chair of SCHAC. "Every HIV infection that is prevented will reinforce the value of having PEP guidelines," he continued.

The cost of lifetime care and treatment for just one HIV-infected person is estimated to be approximately \$195,000 while the cost of a PEP treatment can be as low as \$800. Several health insurers such as Blue Cross of California and Kaiser Permanente of Southern California have recognized the human and financial benefits of PEP and have already offered its use for non-occupational HIV exposures.

“Adopting state guidelines for PEP treatment of inadvertent HIV exposures will promote its use, reduce the spread of this deadly disease, and could save insurers and the state millions in reduced treatment costs,” said Paul Koretz.

Mr. Koretz is a member of the Assembly Health Committee and has been a leader in the effort to improve the lives of those affected by HIV/AIDS. Last year Koretz successfully authored AB 2197, a bill that expanded Medi-Cal coverage to HIV-positive, non-disabled individuals. AB 879 will be referred to the Assembly Health Committee.

###